

How I Made Two Hundred Bucks in a Week Without Skills

Let me tell you about the week that changed everything.

It was a Tuesday in December. My car needed a \$400 repair, my Christmas budget was already stretched thin, and my savings account showed a disappointing \$127. I needed money—fast—but I had no special skills, no side business, and definitely no time for a second job.

Seven days later, I had \$217.43 in extra earnings. Here's exactly how I did it, hour by hour, dollar by dollar.

Day 1: The Setup (Tuesday)

Time invested: 2 hours | Earnings: \$0

I know what you're thinking—no earnings on day one? But this is the day that made everything else possible. I treated it like planting seeds.

Morning (45 minutes)

I signed up for four platforms while drinking my coffee:

1. **Prolific** - Academic research studies, \$8-12/hour equivalent
2. **UserTesting** - App and website testing, \$10-60 per test
3. **Swagbucks** - Survey aggregator with bonuses
4. **Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk)** - Microtasks

For each platform, I filled out every profile question completely. This is crucial—companies filter participants based on demographics. The more complete your profile, the more opportunities you unlock.

Afternoon (45 minutes)

I downloaded the Prolific extension for Chrome and the Swagbucks app on my phone. I also bookmarked MTurk and set up payment through PayPal.

Evening (30 minutes)

I took three qualification tests on UserTesting. You record yourself navigating a sample website while speaking your thoughts aloud. Two passed, one failed. That's normal.

Day 1 Total: \$0.00

Day 2: First Dollars (Wednesday)

Time invested: 3 hours | Earnings: \$34.50

9:00 AM - The First Check

I checked Prolific first thing. Three studies were available! I grabbed all of them:

- “Social Media Usage Survey” - 8 minutes - \$1.50
- “Product Preference Study” - 15 minutes - \$2.80
- “AI Ethics Research” - 20 minutes - \$4.00

Subtotal: \$8.30 in 43 minutes

12:30 PM - Lunch Break Hustle

At lunch, I refreshed UserTesting and found my first real test: a mobile banking app review. I spent 15 minutes exploring the app, talking through my thoughts, and answering follow-up questions.

Payment: \$10.00

7:00 PM - Evening Session

After dinner, I dedicated 90 minutes to grinding:

- MTurk batch tasks (categorizing product images): 45 minutes → \$6.20
- UserTesting screener + full test: 30 minutes → \$10.00
- Swagbucks video watching while doing other tasks: Passive → \$0.00 (banked points)

Day 2 Total: \$34.50

I couldn't believe it. In less than three hours of actual work, I'd earned more than I used to make in half a day at my old retail job. But I knew I couldn't rest—the goal was \$200.

Day 3: Finding My Rhythm (Thursday)

Time invested: 2.5 hours | Earnings: \$28.75

The Morning Check Ritual

I established a pattern: check Prolific at 9 AM, 12 PM, and 6 PM. Most studies drop during business hours EST.

Morning Prolific haul:

- “Memory and Cognition Study” - 25 minutes - \$5.00
- “Purchasing Decisions Survey” - 10 minutes - \$1.75

Subtotal: \$6.75

Afternoon Discovery

I found something on MTurk called “batch HITs”—tasks that take 30-60 seconds each but you can do hundreds of them. I found a batch for labeling whether photos contained animals or not.

150 tasks × \$0.04 = \$6.00 in 50 minutes

Not glamorous, but it added up. I put on a podcast and powered through.

Evening Gold

UserTesting came through again with a premium test—a 45-minute moderated session with a researcher from a major e-commerce company. We had a video call where they watched me shop on their website and asked questions in real-time.

Payment: \$60.00 (delivered in 7 days, but I'm counting it)

Wait, that's \$60 for 45 minutes of work? Yes. Moderated tests pay significantly more, and they're also more engaging. You're having a conversation, not just talking to yourself.

Day 3 Total: \$28.75 (not counting the pending \$60)

Day 4: The Slow Day (Friday)

Time invested: 1.5 hours | Earnings: \$18.20

Every side hustle has slow days. Friday was mine. Fewer studies on Prolific, fewer tests on UserTesting. But I didn't let that stop me.

Pivoting Strategy

When the main platforms are slow, you have to diversify. I signed up for two additional platforms:

- **dscout** - In-depth research studies, pays \$25-250
- **Respondent** - B2B research, pays \$50-400 per study

These take longer to qualify for but pay significantly more.

What I Actually Earned

- Prolific studies: \$7.20
- MTurk batch tasks: \$5.00
- Swagbucks survey (finally!): \$6.00

Day 4 Total: \$18.20

I was at \$81.45 after four days. Halfway there? Not quite. But I had the weekend ahead.

Day 5: Weekend Warrior (Saturday)

Time invested: 4 hours | Earnings: \$52.30

Weekends are interesting for side hustles. Fewer corporate surveys, but more time to dedicate. I decided to block out the morning for focused grinding.

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM: The Marathon

I made it a game. Every task completed, I tracked in a spreadsheet. Here's what four hours looked like:

Platform	Tasks	Time	Earnings
Prolific	4 studies	55 min	\$12.50
UserTesting	2 tests	35 min	\$20.00
MTurk	Batch + individual	90 min	\$14.80
Swagbucks	Surveys + bonuses	60 min	\$5.00

Morning Total: \$52.30

The Breakthrough Moment

Around 11 AM, I got an email from dscout. They wanted me for a week-long study about my morning routine. I'd have to record short videos each day about how I start my day.

Payment: \$75.00 (to be paid after completion)

I accepted immediately. This is the power of signing up for everything—opportunities find you.

Day 5 Total: \$52.30 (plus \$75 pending)

Day 6: Sunday Surprise (Sunday)

Time invested: 2 hours | Earnings: \$31.00

Sundays are typically the slowest day for surveys and tests. But I'd learned something important: the platforms reward consistency.

Morning Check

Prolific had a study specifically looking for participants who log in on weekends. They were researching "weekend leisure activities."

Payment: \$8.00 for 20 minutes

Afternoon Windfall

UserTesting sent a push notification—a "Live Conversation" was available. These are premium moderated sessions that fill up in seconds. I grabbed it.

The session was with a startup building a meal planning app. We talked for 30 minutes about my cooking habits, frustrations with meal prep, and what features would make me switch apps.

Payment: \$23.00

I also cashed out my Swagbucks points. I'd accumulated 2,500 points (worth \$25) but I'd only count what I earned this week: roughly \$8 worth.

Day 6 Total: \$31.00

Day 7: The Final Push (Monday)

Time invested: 3 hours | Earnings: \$52.48

I woke up with \$163.75 confirmed earnings. I needed \$36.25 more to hit my goal. Monday was make-or-break.

8:00 AM - Aggressive Refresh Mode

I had browser tabs open for Prolific, UserTesting, and MTurk. I refreshed every few minutes while doing morning tasks.

By 10 AM:

- 2 Prolific studies: \$6.50
- 1 UserTesting test: \$10.00

Running total: \$180.25

Noon - The Bonus Hunt

Swagbucks and other platforms often have bonuses for completing specific tasks. I found:

- “Complete 5 surveys today” bonus: \$5.00
- Sign up for a free trial (I set a reminder to cancel): \$8.00
- Watch video series: \$1.50

Running total: \$194.75

4:00 PM - The Final Tasks

I needed \$5.25 more. I went to MTurk and found a batch task that paid well: transcribing short audio clips.

42 clips × \$0.13 = \$5.46

Took about an hour, but it got me over the line.

Day 7 Total: \$52.48

The Final Count

Day	Time Spent	Earnings
Tuesday	2 hours	\$0.00
Wednesday	3 hours	\$34.50
Thursday	2.5 hours	\$28.75
Friday	1.5 hours	\$18.20
Saturday	4 hours	\$52.30
Sunday	2 hours	\$31.00
Monday	3 hours	\$52.48
TOTAL	18 hours	\$217.23

Plus I had **\$135 in pending payments** from the moderated sessions and dscout study.

Effective hourly rate: \$12.07/hour (not counting pending payments)

With pending: **\$19.57/hour**

What I Learned

1. The First Week Is the Hardest

You're building reputation, learning the platforms, and figuring out what works. Week two and beyond will be more efficient.

2. Diversification Is Key

No single platform would have gotten me to \$200. The combination of Prolific, UserTesting, MTurk, and Swagbucks created multiple income streams.

3. Premium Opportunities Exist

Moderated sessions and in-depth studies pay 3-5x more than standard surveys. Invest time in qualifying for them.

4. Consistency Beats Intensity

Checking platforms 3-4 times daily for 15 minutes beats one 4-hour grinding session. Opportunities come and go quickly.

5. Track Everything

My spreadsheet kept me motivated. Seeing the numbers grow, even by a few dollars, made me want to keep going.

Your Turn: The \$200 Challenge

Here's my challenge to you: replicate this week. Not next month—this week. Here's your action list:

Today:

- [] Sign up for Prolific, UserTesting, MTurk, and Swagbucks
- [] Complete all profile questionnaires
- [] Take any qualification tests available

Tomorrow:

- [] Check platforms at 9 AM, 12 PM, and 6 PM
- [] Complete at least 3 tasks
- [] Track everything in a spreadsheet

This Week:

- [] Apply for dscout and Respondent (higher-paying)
- [] Look for batch tasks on MTurk
- [] Aim for at least one premium moderated test

The Bigger Picture

That \$217 paid for half my car repair. More importantly, it proved something to myself: extra income isn't reserved for people with special skills or lucky breaks. It's available to anyone willing to put in consistent effort.

Three months later, I'm averaging **\$400-500/month** from these same platforms, spending about 8-10 hours per week. It's not life-changing money, but it covers groceries, pays down debt, and gives me breathing room.

And it all started with one week of focused effort.

What's stopping you from starting today?

Have questions about any platform I mentioned? Drop a comment below or check out our [detailed platform reviews](/posts/survey-platform-reviews) (/posts/survey-platform-reviews).

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